



THE HISTORY OF ROSS

1909 - 2009



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FAMILY TREE

This family tree, compiled by Tim Rodgers-Wilson, shows the descendants of David Skinner Maxwell and his wife Margaret Arnot. Their second son, George, became a prominent criminal barrister and Member of Parliament. In 1909 George purchased a property in the Yarra Valley, that he named "Ross", which has been enjoyed by the family ever since.



Maxwell family at Letham about 1906

George Maxwell and his wife and four of his five children are on the extreme right

THE FAMILY STORY

Ross holds a very special place in the hearts of our family.

Nestled in the hills of the Yarra Valley, it has provided a sanctuary to nurture both body and soul. It has given us the opportunity to work the land; to grow meat, fruit, vegetables, and to produce eggs; to feel the great satisfaction of self sufficiency through hard physical labour. We have all felt joy in the natural, peaceful beauty of the bush, the mountains and the valley. **Ross** has provided comfort for those far away with its tranquil memories. It has been a place to meet, and share, and a place to celebrate in both happy times and sad.

Six generations have known and loved **Ross**. Here is some of the story of the first 100 years.....



George and Jean at Ross about 1930

George Arnot Maxwell married Jean Williamson Russell-Ross on the 19th of December 1896 at the Presbyterian Church, Yarra Glen. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. David Skinner Maxwell, the groom's father. The wedding reception was held at Kinraig, the home of Mrs. Isabella Jane Russell-Ross, the bride's mother. About 140 guests attended and travelled by train from Melbourne in a special carriage added for the occasion. The Maxwell's went to Healesville for their honeymoon.

George and Jean Maxwell had 5 children; Ray b.1897, Jean b.1899, Ailie b.1901, George b.1903 and Ina b.1907.

In 1909 the family purchased the 125 acres of farm land that they called "**Ross**" after Jean's Scottish maiden name. The property had a large apple orchard with a total of 963 trees which is believed to have been established in around 1890. There were several horses, a couple of cows and calves, and some pigs. The farm had a weatherboard house with 2 small bedrooms, a living room, a small kitchen and verandas on both the east and west sides.



Maxwell kids in the veggie garden

There were various farming facilities on the property. There was a barn, a stable, a cart shed, a spray cart, and a spring cart with harness. A laundry was situated next to the barn and a dairy. It had a large 16 foot deep well that was filled by rain collected from the roofs of the barn and the house. Beside the tank was a windmill that pumped water from the well to an overhead tank situated behind the barn. Taps in the laundry, bathroom and kitchen were gravity fed from this tank. The windmill has been replaced by an electric pump, but the well is still there and supplies water to the new house.

George renovated the house to accommodate his large family. The kitchen, living room and one bedroom were extended; a large bedroom for George's mother, 'grandmother's room', and a master bedroom, both with fireplaces were added. There were 2 small maid's bedrooms built off a back veranda that led to a bathroom with a woodchip heater to provide hot water for baths. Another tank to collect rainwater was situated behind the library.

There was no toilet in the house. A small out-house was situated about 20 metres south of the house at the top of the garden. The toilet was a long drop with a comfortable wooden seat. Pink powder was sprinkled into the toilet to help quell the smells! Inside the house there were china chamber pots for use during the night that the maids would empty in the morning.

The family's clothes were washed in the laundry next to the barn. Water was boiled in a copper above a wood fire; the clothes were stirred around with a paddle and fished out, rinsed in a wooden trough of cold water, and then put through a hand-turned wringer. They were pegged out to dry on a single-wire clothes line that was erected between the tennis court and the turkey shed. This area was known as the 'The Drying Green'. In the kitchen about 5 irons would be heated on top of the wood stove. Clothes would be pressed on a blanket on the kitchen table, and irons exchanged for hotter ones, as they cooled.

There was no electricity. The lighting was provided by kerosene lamps which were filled every morning from a large tin of kerosene kept in the laundry. Cooking was done on the woodstove. A cast iron Dixie, holding about 10 litres of water sat permanently on the stove. All hot water used in the kitchen came from the Dixie. Water was poured from here into the kettle, so that it would boil more quickly. Heating in the house was by wood fires.

In the dairy was an ice chest to keep the perishable food cool. The chest had a door on top that lifted up to accommodate a large block of ice. Food was stored through a door in the front of the chest. The melting ice would run down the sides to the tray underneath effectively keeping the food cool. When uncle Bob went to the village once or twice a week in the horse and buggy, he would buy an ice block if required.

A portable Coolgardie safe was also used to store meat and dairy products. This was a metal mesh cupboard approximately 60cm high and 45cm wide and deep. It had a gutter around the base and felt-like absorbent fabric up the walls. The gutter was kept full of

water, the fabric absorbed this and as it evaporated it cooled the air to keep the food fresh. The safe would be hung in a cool place, on a veranda or under a shady tree.



*The family under the oak tree at **Ross***

Just off the back veranda, shaded by the Oak tree was an enclosure about 3 or 4 meters square. The walls were made of fly screen mesh and it was a great place to sit on a warm summer evening free from mosquitos and flies. It was affectionately known as 'the meat safe'!

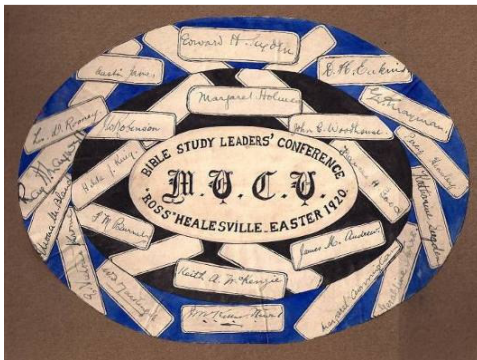
The family spent a year living at Ross – probably 1911. George would travel to Melbourne for the week and would spend the weekends at Ross. Presumably the children had a tutor as there is no record of them attending the local schools. In 1912 the girls were all enrolled at Fintona in Melbourne where they completed their schooling.

George Maxwell had always intended building a new house with good views on what is now known as 'the Old Golf Paddock', but this never eventuated. Some time in those early years he had a small 3 roomed weatherboard cottage built just east of the big yard. He also had quite extensive fowl yards built to the north of the cottage. His intention was for his older brother Jim to set up a poultry business at Ross. This never happened and his younger, bachelor brother, Robert (Uncle Bob) moved into the cottage after retiring from his job as a station manager in the outback.



Uncle Bob on the veranda of the old house with 'Cooke'

Records show that in 1912 over 1,000 cases of apples were sold from **Ross**. George Maxwell loved to farm the property but, as he was a barrister and member of Federal Parliament, and in addition becoming increasingly blind, it was not possible for him to be physically involved with the farming practices. Uncle Bob continued to milk a couple of cows and sell calves and he produced many vegetables from a large vegetable garden south of the house that was watered by bucket, from a dam at the far end. In addition he raised turkeys, ducks and many fowls.



There were a number of Student Christian Movement gatherings at Ross

By 1922 most of the orchard had been removed, the pigs and most of the fowls sold.

The family spent many happy times with friends staying weekends at Ross. When Ray and Jean were studying at Melbourne University they were members of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and several of the SCM conferences were held at Ross.

The old house was weatherboard, painted white. The roof was corrugated iron painted grey. Inside the house the walls were tongue and groove timber. The floors were timber with lino in both the kitchen and passageways. The floorboards were dark stained and the bedrooms and living room had a large carpet square. The ceilings were made of pressed tin.

The kitchen had a large old cedar table down the end with old cedar chairs. A scrubbed pine table stood in front of the wood stove. Furniture was solid, worn and comfortable. In the

living room there was a corner cupboard beside the fire place. There was an old piano and a hand turned gramophone. Between the living room and the library were dark green Damask curtains. The bedroom had iron bedsteads and blinds at the windows with curtains at the side.

In 1925 **Ross** was auctioned, but failed to sell.



Yan, Bob and John on Dorret about 1931

The Maxwell children were now adults and would visit **Ross** with their own families.

'Grandmother's room' became known as the 'Ellis's room' and was used by Ray and Ulrich and their sons Tim and Max. The larger of the 2 original bedrooms became known as the 'Loder's room' and was used by Jean and Louis and their sons Yan, Bob and John. Ina and Alan Turner and their son Geoffrey would also holiday at Ross. George and Madge Maxwell and their daughters Margie and Jean didn't visit Ross very often as they lived in Yarram where they ran a store "Maxwell, Collins" which consumed much of their time.

All the boys loved to spend time learning skills from Uncle Bob and listening to his tales of life in the outback. About once a week, Uncle Bob would boil up a couple of old kerosene tins of water on his woodstove in the cottage. He would carry these down the veranda to the little bathroom with its cast iron bath and pour himself a nice hot tub to soak in. There was never any electricity or heating in the cottage only a wood stove.

After George Maxwell died in 1935, Ailie would drive her mother to **Ross** and park in the old turkey shed that became known as 'Ailie's garage'. During the depression years of the 30's the family would often catch rabbits with a trap or ferret. The boys would sell the skins and



Uncle Bob with produce from the farm

the family would enjoy the meat. Many vegetables were grown and the boys learnt to milk the cows, harness the horses and work the land. Uncle Bob also taught them to collect wattle bark. First you would cut down the tree and strip the bark. This would be laid out on the old lorry, (which was immobile by now), until it became brittle. It was then taken to J. Kennon and Son who were tanners in Richmond. The foreman would chew a piece of bark to determine its suitability to use to tan hides, and pay accordingly.

During the years of the Second World War, vegetables were in short supply and the family grew potatoes and pumpkins and onions for seed at **Ross**.

In 1946 the war had ended but there was a serious shortage of housing. The family felt a great social obligation and decided to rent out the house, retaining the cottage and use of the 2 largest bedrooms in the main house. The cottage had a tiny kitchen, 2 bedrooms, a lean-to bathroom and little outhouse toilet. With use of the Ellis's room as a sitting room and the master bedroom with 5 beds, the family felt they had adequate accommodation for their infrequent visits.

At this time, electricity was connected to the old house, but was never connected to the cottage.

Ross was rented out to Mr and Mrs Royle and their daughter Robyn for 25 shillings per week. They were seen as ideal tenants as Mrs Royle was a keen gardener. The Royle family lived at **Ross** until 1953, when they bought a house in Healesville.

After the war Bob Loder and his brother Yan often spent time with their friends at **Ross**. Sometimes Mrs Royle would be called on to chaperone or Ailie would come up with Grannie Maxwell. The boys would sleep in the cottage and the girls together in the master bedroom. They would play tennis on the rough court Uncle Bob had built, with its slope to one end, or hit golf balls around the paddocks, ride horses, swim in the river and help out with the farming.

In 1952 Grannie Maxwell died leaving her estate equally to her 5 children. Ailie, who had been caring for her, moved to Canberra, where Ray and Ina had settled. George was living at Yarrum in Gippsland, so Jean was the only person in a position to visit **Ross** regularly. She bought out her siblings, who were very happy with the arrangement, and all continued to be welcomed back to **Ross** until they died.

Jean and Louis Loder now owned **Ross**. Louis put a pump on the Yarra River to supplement the water supplies. A flushing toilet was installed in the little maid's room on the eastern side of the back veranda. Louis was not a keen farmer, but he supported Jean in her passionate love of the place. The Loder boys and their families all have fond memories of time spent at **Ross** during these years.



*Grannie Maxwell on the veranda at
Ross*

The R.E.Loder family always spent the May school holidays at **Ross**. They would build wigwams, have picnics at Stoney Creek and visit the Healesville wildlife sanctuary. Although there were so many things to do, the favourite activity was visiting the milking at the Christies dairy next door. The cows would be herded into the muddy yard where they would run to the hay bale in the milking stalls, their teats were then washed with warm soapy water from a bucket, and the suction caps would then be fitted to suck the milk. The children would climb in the hay stack and look for random nests of chooks eggs, or cats with litters of kittens (which they were never allowed to take home!).

On 15th January 1962, raging bushfires burnt the house, cottage and all the sheds to the ground.

When Bob Loder arrived with his parents to see if **Ross** had sustained damage in the fires, all that was left were the chimneys and the windmill standing amongst burning embers. Over the next few days looters came and salvaged anything worth saving. Many working bees (including immediate family cousins and friends) were held over the next weeks and months to clear the debris and dismantle chimneys to make the site safe.

Jean designed a new house with the help of good friend and architect, David Chancellor. The house was built on the site of the old tennis court. During the building Jean and Louis camped in a caravan. The new house maximizing the sun and fabulous views of the valley was completed in 1964. Jean and Louis often entertained large numbers in the new house



*The Loder and Archer children with Libby Ferguson
on the veranda of the new house about 1965*

and happily lent it to extended family and friends.

The May school holidays for the Loder children now included a series of ponies that came and went.

In 1967, Yan, who had given up farming because he had a bad back, and his wife Ann and sons Peter, David, and Noel moved in to live at 37 The Ridge, Canterbury, so Jean and Louis made Ross their permanent home. Yan and Ann were given ownership of The Ridge and sold it for \$18,000.00 when they moved to the United States of America (USA) in 1970.

Jean and Louis spent a year travelling overseas in 1970. In 1971 the R.E. Loder children were keen to be able to visit **Ross** and be independent of their grandparents, so they started salvaging materials and building a shack on The Ranch (northern bush block). It was never completed. Most of the materials came from a cottage on Len Carter's place at Rosebud and the only cost of the dwelling was about 7lbs of 2" nails!

In February 1972, Louis suffered a fatal heart attack after a strenuous walk to the river to fix the pump. He died before the ambulance arrived. Jean was not comfortable to stay at **Ross** on her own, and she moved into a flat at her son John's house in Kew. She loved it when her siblings, or grandchildren, would come and stay with her at **Ross**.

In 1974 Jean Loder transferred ownership of the land west of the new highway to Bob and east of the highway to John. Yan was living in America and received cash compensation.

Bob and Ruth Loder now owned **Ross** and with their 4 children beginning to marry and have children of their own, a new generation was emerging to create new memories of this special and precious place.



A watercolour of the Cottage by David Chancellor 1946

After the fires burned the old house in 1961, David designed the existing house

MILESTONES

1909 George Arnot Maxwell purchased 'Ross'.
The house was extended.
The cottage and fowl houses were built.
Pine trees were planted on southern boundary and
as an avenue from the
Cottage 100m to the south.

1922 G.A.Maxwell was going blind.
Most of the orchard removed, pigs and most of the
fowls sold.

1925 **Ross** auctioned but did not sell.

1930s The L.F. Loder family stayed regularly at **Ross**.

1935 George Arnot Maxwell died at Collessie in
Canterbury after a long illness.

1940 The Ellis and Turner families moved to Melbourne from Canberra.
Ulrich and Alan were transferred during the war.
Both families spent lots of time holidaying at **Ross**.

1945 Yan and Bob Loder both overseas WW2.
Uncle Bob became ill and moved from **Ross** to Collessie.

1946 Uncle Bob died at Collessie aged 83.
Ross rented to the Royle family. Yan and Bob demobilized from services.

1947 Bob Loder and his girlfriend Ruth Archer with other friends frequently spent
time at **Ross**.
Onions for seed and potatoes grown in Little Orchard.

1949 Bob Loder married Ruth Archer 21/12/1949.

1952 Jean Maxwell died leaving her estate equally to her children.
Jean Loder bought out her siblings share of **Ross**.

1953 The Royles bought a house in Healesville and moved after 8 years.
Yan and Ann Loder married and lived at **Ross** for a month.
Flushing toilet installed in maid's room, east side back veranda.



*Bob feeding the chooks on
'The Drying Green'*

- 1962** January 15th bush fires burnt house, cottage and sheds to the ground.
Fire damaged pines removed (danger of breeding sirex wasp)
- 1963** New house built on old tennis court site.
Jean and Louis used caravan whilst building in progress.
- 1964** Easter Thursday 1964 new house completed.
Lemon scented gum planted by the house gate.
Shetland pony on loan from Joe Kay.
- 1966** R.E.Loder family bought pony Liza, foal born 8 months later...surprise!!
- 1967** CRB acquired 8 acres of **Ross** and commenced a new highway.
Bought 13 acres from Stringer, to north of **Ross**, called Ross Ranch.
Jean and Louis moved in to live permanently at **Ross**.
During drought given 2 horses, Silver and Tongala Star.
- 1970** Yan and Ann Loder moved to America with their family and sold 37 The Ridge.
- 1971** R.E.Loder children started building shack on The Ranch.
- 1972** February 11th, Louis Loder had massive heart attack and died at **Ross**.
Jean moved permanently to a flat, at Hillcrest Ave (John and Liz's home)
- 1973** Ray and Ulrich spent about 6 weeks with Jean at **Ross**.
Annual gatherings of Maxwell siblings at **Ross**.
- 1974** Jean Loder transferred ownership of the land, west of the highway to Bob
and east of the highway to John. (Yan received cash to compensate as
he was living in USA.)
- 1975** John and Elizabeth Loder sold their land to John Glasson for \$40,000.
- 1979** Jean Loder died June 26th. She visited **Ross** for the last time ,with her son
Bob, the day before she died.
A bungalow was built beside the garage, under the roof where the old
caravan had been.
- 1980** Yan visited from America, first time home in 10 years.
Pin oaks were planted up the driveway.
New tennis court was built to west of house.

- 1982** Major extensions, including 2 new bedrooms and existing 3rd bedroom converted to shower, toilet and laundry.
Bought 60 x-bred ewes and 2 rams from David Chancellor.
- 1983** Paved new back verandah with bricks from around old well.
Bought 6 y.o. chestnut mare Sheherizard (Sherry)
Removed top of windmill for safety.
Drought...agisted out stock.
- 1984** Kitchen renovated.
- 1985** Vegetable garden built west of tennis court.
Swimming pool built on site of old dam.
Bought pony Tacker.
Planted 30 eucalypts in Golf Paddock and Millards.
- 1986** November 13th, Bob Loder's 60th birthday celebrated with marquee on front Lawn.
Sold ewes and bought approx 50 wethers.
- 1987** Ray Arnot Ellis died aged 90 years.
Ailie Arnot Maxwell died aged 85 years.
- 1991** Tim Loder fenced and ripped land to start an Instant Hedges business.
- 1992** Five greens of the Royal Ross Golf Course created with Gordon Beavis' tractor.
Ina Arnot Turner died aged 84 years. Her ashes were scattered at Ross.
George Maxwell Jnr planted the Maxwell memorial pine tree 1/11/92
- 1993** The inaugural Royal Ross golf tournament with Loder, Wilson, Milner, Gadsden, Layton and Leonard playing for the Fairview Cup
- 1994** Tim Loder extended the nursery.
Bob and Roo spending most weeks Thursday to Sunday at **Ross**.
Inherited 2 alpacas from the Gadsdens.
- 1997** George Arnot Maxwell Jnr died aged 94 years.
- 1998** Two green plastic 5000 gal tanks replaced steel tank installed by CRB 1967.
Tim Loder planted second nursery to grow hedges for Melb.City Council.
- 2000** Olive trees planted to commemorate Bob & Roo's 50th wedding anniversary.

- 2005** Yan died of a stroke in San Francisco aged 80 years. His ashes were scattered at Ross. After Christmas, Bob Loder suffered a stroke at **Ross** and had serious heart Surgery. His main concern was getting well enough to get back to **Ross**.
- 2006** Lucy Rodgers-Wilson and her “boys” took over the care of the vegetable garden and had regular weekends with “Bobby’s List” to guide them.
- 2007** Ann Loder died in San Francisco.
Bob and Roo resumed their weekly visits to **Ross**, Rooie driving!
- 2008** John Loder died 24/10/2008.
November 15th, Tim Rodgers-Wilson and Sally Chisholm were married at Christ Church, South Yarra and held a wedding reception in a marquee on the tennis court at **Ross**. The first wedding celebration at **Ross** (Ray and Ulrich Ellis) had their honeymoon there.
- 2009** February 7th, Black Saturday, **Ross** threatened by fire on all sides.
Peter Rodgers-Wilson and Dan Gilfillan installed a fire fighter pump and sprinkler system on 9th February

November 14th – centenary celebration held at Ross



BOB LODERS REFLECTIONS

THE LAND

My grandfather, **George Arnot Maxwell**, bought **Ross** in 1909. He was looking for a country holiday house, and Arthur Phillips, a solicitor friend of his who owned Yarra Grange, told him there was a place near the Grange that was for sale. George Maxwell bought this land and it was given his wife's maiden name. She had been **Jean Williamson Ross**.

Small map with title of land

The property was originally about 125 acres. Sixty acres on the west side of the Healesville Rd and sixty-five acres on the east side. The Healesville Rd later became known as the Maroondah Highway and then in the 1960's the highway was diverted and this road was eventually named **Maxwell's Rd**.

The sixty acres on the west side of the road was hardly ever used and in about 1938 it was sold to Arthur Phillips for 5 pounds or \$10 per acre! This reduced the rates to 17 pounds and 19 shillings. Many years later this land, which was owned by Michael Herman who then owned The Grange was sold to someone who established the 'Skirmish' Games.

In 1967 the highway was diverted to go more or less in a straight line from Hill Rd to a new bridge built over the Yarra River. My brother John, who worked for the Country Roads Board (CRB) at the time, tried unsuccessfully to have the road diverted on to a gentler contour line further west. This project acquired about 7 acres of Ross, leaving about 36.4 acres on the east side of the new road and 21.9 acres, with the house on it, on the west side. In 1974 my mother, who had inherited Ross from her mother in 1954, transferred the 36.4 acres to my brother John and the 21.9 acres with the house on it to me and my wife Roo. Soon after, John sold his land to the Glasson's.

In about 1967, we heard that Stringer, who owned about 13 acres of land to the north of us, had died and the land was to be sold and a caravan park built. After some hectic negotiations we were eventually able to purchase it, which gave us frontage to the river, but more importantly it protected us from having undesirable neighbours.

When the new road cut us off from the river, the CRB, at their expense, put a pump on the river and a tank on our hill. When John sold to the Glasson's the pump was on Glasson's land, so we had an easement put on the title that gave us access to the pump and the line up the hill.

TRANSPORT

The more or less universal ownership of a car is a relatively modern phenomenon. Roo and I didn't own a car until we had been married for 4 or 5 years. My parents got their first car after nearly 10 years. Neither of my grandparents ever learnt to drive (and neither did 2 of their 5 children) but they bought a car, a Studebaker in 1918 when my mother got her license. They had been married for about 25 years.

In 1909 when they purchased **Ross**, there were three ways to get there; by train, bus or by horse and cart.



Louis and Jean with friends on the 'lorry'

The Maxwells lived at "Daracombe", a five acre property on the North West corner of Burke and Cotham Roads. As well as a large house, there was a gate-keepers lodge where Hughes lived. He was the coachman, gardener and general factotum.

When the whole family went to Ross, they went by the buggy driven by Hughes. It took all day.

All my childhood my great uncle Bob lived in the cottage. He used to go to the village once or sometimes twice a week in the buggy. If we went with him, we'd get out and walk up the steep hill to take the strain off Ruby, the elderly horse.

The family had many house parties at Ross. When they went on picnics they'd use the horse drawn lorry.

There was a daily train from Melbourne to Healesville. It brought the mail and as it blew a loud blast on its whistle as it came into Healesville we'd know that if we went to the village in half an hour, the mail would be sorted and available at the post office.

This train also stopped at Yarra Glen. When my grandparents were married in 1896 they put a special carriage on to the train to take the guests from Melbourne to the wedding in Yarra Glen.

THE VILLAGE

Healesville was first settled in 1865. It was called Healesville after Richard Heales, who was Premier of Victoria 1860-1861. In 1909, Healesville had a population of approximately 500-600. It is now, in 2009, closer to 10,000.

The Village consisted of a Blacksmith, one Baker (Roy), one Grocer (Stanley), one Butcher (Hill), one Green Grocer (Taber – he had five daughters!), a laundry (French's – it's still there! All we ever took there was the white table cloth from the big dining room table once a year), two Hotels, a Post Office and a few other shops.

There were also a large number of Boarding Houses. In those days, going overseas for a holiday was almost unheard of. Even going interstate was not common, so Healesville, being not too far from Melbourne, was very popular.

George Hill, the Butcher, had a property next to **Ross**, on the corner of Hill Rd (though Hill Rd was named after Mrs Bill Hill – not George!). He was a bachelor. In the 1920s, we had a cook called Eta. My grandfather thought they'd be a good match, so he sent a message to George, asking him to call at **Ross** at 3pm that day "to discuss repairs to their boundary fence". At 2.45pm he told Eta, "I have to go down to the river. If I'm not back when George arrives, give him a cup of tea." He then made sure that he didn't get back until about 5pm. George and Eta liked each other, got married and lived happily ever after.



Gathering in front of the dairy at Ross

I REMEMBER.....

Taking the calves down for milking

The calves ran with the cows during the day. Late afternoon, we'd shut them into the stables. In the morning, we'd put a halter on the calf, who would charge at breakneck speed, dragging us with feet rarely touching the ground, to its mum in the cow shed.

Playing golf

My great uncle, David Maxwell, owned the St Andrews Boarding House at Flinders and was one of the founders of the Flinders Golf Club. He had played off scratch at St Andrews, Scotland, before coming to Australia aged 16, and then won the inaugural Victorian golf championship at Royal Melbourne Golf Club in 1892. He tried to teach us to play golf, but we were not good! Our golf course at Ross was very primitive. It consisted of two jam tins, about 120m apart, sunk into the ground at either end of what is now "The Old Golf Paddock".



*L-R: 'Uncle' Charlie Woodward, Ailie, George,
George Jr, David*

The horses walking over the underground well

The well used to be covered with planks, about 4m x 14cm x 5cm. However, they were burnt in the 1962 fire and replaced by the galvanized iron that is there now. There was a small fence, with a gate, outside the laundry – dairy area. Sometimes we were woken at night by the distinctive sound of the horses crossing the well. We knew then that someone had left the gate open and in the morning we'd find the horses a mile or two down the road.

Playing tennis

Like the golf course, the tennis court was very primitive. It was made by uncle Bob with horse and scoop. The lines were painted on with lime. One end was quite flat, but the other had a fair slope, perhaps caused by the roots of the pines. It was where the house is now. One net post is still there!



*Bob and Roo with Phil Holder on the tennis court
circa 1948*

The full moon rising

A lightening of the sky over some point over the hills would tell us where the moon would appear. We'd watch as a small slither of moon would appear, then quite quickly the moon itself would rise. After only a few minutes, the whole perfect sphere would break free from the dark line of the hills. Because of the shallow angle it looks much larger when it first rises.

The magic lake

Roo has always thought it a bit juvenile the way I call it "the magic lake", but that's what it always was when I was a boy. You have all seen it. On a still, clear autumn morning, the flats covered by a thick, dense layer of mist, and the mountains rising beyond it.

Hot scones for morning tea

This was always a treat. We had to provide plenty of dry wattle wood for the cook, as that made the very hot oven necessary for good scones.

Learning to harness the horses

Uncle Bob made us always fix the harness, facing the rear of the horse, with our backs close to its head – so if it kicked out, it wouldn't kick us! (Not that our horses – Ruby, the old cart horse, and Judy, the even older retired cart horse – had much of a kick left in them.) When Judy died, she was 34.

Getting help up the hills

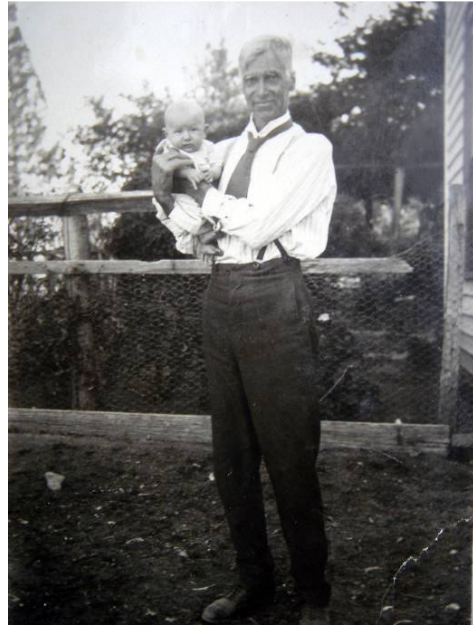
Yan and I used to ride our bikes to Ross. It was before the days of sophisticated gears. Approaching a steep hill, we'd wait for a big truck to pass us, then ride up behind it. When it changed to a very low gear, its speed would be just a few kms per hour, we would hang on to the back of the truck, making sure that the driver couldn't see us in his rear vision mirror. Then we'd cast off at the top of the hill!

Lobster Roo

In the bathroom of the old Ross there was a wood chip heater, pine cones were particularly good fuel. You had to be careful controlling the flow of water. Too fast and the water was lukewarm, too slow and the water boiled, turned to steam, and threatened to blow up! I made sure that Roo's bath water was as hot as she could stand it, so that it would still be warm for me. She complained about getting out of the bath looking like a lobster, red from top to toe!



Bob harvesting hay from the horse paddock



Uncle Bob born 1861 with Bob born 1926



Roo with Phil and David Chancellor by the river



Bob and Roo cutting chaff



George with Bob on Dorret



H.M.A.S. "SHROPSHIRE",

SUNDAY

Bob Loder - Navy

In memory of my grandfather, to my grandmother, and to my parents;

If all of you were tomorrow to disappear out of my life, you have already given me something for which I would not exchange the richest inheritance in the world - for there is no inheritance worth one tenth of the memories of my childhood.

I had been reading for a couple of hours, but suddenly found that I couldn't concentrate on my book; my mind kept wandering back over the years - not, as it so often does, to my days at school, to sport, and work, success and failure, but to the many, many happy hours I spent at Ross.

I can see the old house now, a symbol of peace and calm, fitting so perfectly into its surroundings; the trees and shrubs of the garden, rising into the great green mass that is the oak; the willow, with the windmill towering over it, and the old, weather beaten barn, it's rough-hewn piles, leaning a little with the weight of the years; and there is smoke rising lazily from the chimney.

I can see the flats, with the road cutting straight across them, then swinging away as it disappears into the dark green gums on the far side; the red roof of Summerleigh Lodge, and away to the left, the sprawling group of houses that is Healesville; behind, the hills of the Divide. Those ever changing hills! I can see them a deep, deep blue against the paler blue of the sky; I can see them dark green in the clear heat of midday, or purple against the reflected glory of the sunset; or I can see them dark, forbidding shapes against a starry sky.

I can hear the magpies singing as I look out over a "magic" lake on a still autumn morning; I can see a duck, released from the fowl house, waddling rapidly towards the dam, with a dozen little ducklings, bright yellow against the green of the fowl -paddock, falling over each other to keep up with her. The river is a blazing ribbon of gold, as the wattle is in bloom, and the group of young silver gums, between the two swamps, stand tall and graceful in the afternoon sun.

Don't ever sell Ross, Grannie; I want my children to know the sounds of the lonely pines sighing in the warm summer night, and the careless singing of the birds in the early morn. I want them to learn to harness a horse, and milk a cow, and to snig timber. I want to see them dragged from stable to bail by a frantic calf, and ride, and fall off; to chop wood, and cut fern, and grub trees; to show them how to build wigwams, to help them pick blackberries, to show them where to find maidenhair fern, and to take them swimming in the river. I want them to know the joy of getting up early on a cold, clear morning, and going for long walks in the sweetly-scented bush; the excitement of looking for eggs in the fowl house, and the satisfaction of filling the space under the house with firewood.

These, and a thousand other happy, happy memories; these are merely a few sentimental jottings - for a man gets very sentimental up here, a thousand miles from home; they are in no way complete, nor are they good English, nor are they even good grammar. I just felt I had to scribble something, and I have set things down as they have occurred to me without rhyme or reason; I am tempted to revise them into an essay, but it seems rather hypocritical, so I shall leave them as they are.

In addition to the best parents and grandparents a fellow could have, I would also like to send these ramblings to Uncle Bob, whose unfailing patience, kindness, and generosity, - as well as his captivating yarns of the outback, - we shall always remember.

To you all I send these, with the overwhelming gratitude of three very lucky blokes (I accept full responsibility of my brothers agreeing with me)

Your very loving grandson, son and nephew

Bob

P.S. It is Tuesday morning, and I have re-read this. It misses. I hesitate to send it, but I think I shall, and when I am down - I think we arrive on the 15th, if I am still with the ship, I will try and explain.

Always your ever loving

Bob

Typed on the ship's typewriter in 'Shropshire' off the coast of Queensland in early 1946 on the way to Japan. The ship was recalled to Melbourne to take the Australian contingent to London for the Victory March.

A FEW MEMORIES FROM TIM ELLIS

Grandpa moved the family to Ross for 12 months, I'm not sure when, to save money. He would go up at weekends by train. Mum remembers going up on "the lorry" with all their goods and chattels and the servants, while Grandpa and the Grannies went by train. The Lorry was a big flat-decked vehicle drawn by 2 horses and the trip took the whole day. It was still in the coach house before the fire, and I remember playing on it, but never riding on it. Also in the coach house was a funny vehicle with a big round body, maybe to carry water.

When we were children, Uncle Bob used to drive us into the village in the buggy. Coming back up the hill we had to get out and walk.....and NOT hang on to the back!! "Whip behind the horse's blind" Uncle Bob would call out. The 2 horses I remember were Ruby and Judy. I was terrified of them as they seemed so big to a small boy. But I think we did ride them.



Ray, Tim and Ulrich Ellis

Once I think Johnny and I walked to the village over the river flats. There we encountered a herd of cows or bulls, which terrified us both...I just remember getting through a fence and then running, pre John's polio I suppose.

On another occasion John and I were over the road, which was then part of the Ross property. Along the ridge was a row of pines and we were stupid enough to light a fire, which got away from us. Beyond the ridge towards Green Point there were acres of wheat. We panicked and I raced over to Ross leaving John to cope with the fire, and brought back the adults to put it out with wet bags. It was one of the most frightening moments of my life!

John and I used to spend hours playing with our dinky toys on the rough land between the main road and the Ross fence. We made elaborate roads for them. I don't remember seeing snakes, but lots of wild flowers (egg and bacon).

Uncle Bob used to ask us down to the cottage for fruit saline (fizzy water and lemon powder) and biscuits shaped like bears, still about but not as delicious.

We used to go up to Ross during the war years (the Ellis family). Short of petrol Dad coasted down every hill and Mum used to rock herself (and we kids had to follow suit) backwards and forwards to give the car enough momentum to keep going for as long as possible without the engine. Once we took our Christmas dinner up beyond Healesville and had it in a small reserve by a hairpin bend, I still think I could identify it, it somehow reminds me of that scene out of "On the beach".

I don't remember electric light, but have strong memories of the kerosene lamps with their little lace mantles. There was certainly nothing like a septic tank. Going up the path to the lavatory was rather scary, especially at night with a lamp.

The old barn was full of junk. I remember the oil can full of tallow for making candles, a big chaff cutter and lots of old clothes. We used to dress up; there is a snap of us, Johnny in a pram. There was also a trunk in the back corridor holding old clothes, including Grannie's wedding dress.

Does anyone remember the ghost? Only the sound of footsteps walking down the corridor from the bedrooms to the sitting room. Mum and Dad heard it once, and others. Not me! Dad was mad about the planchette he made himself, and I remember séances in the sitting room and being very frightened about something. I remember sing songs around the piano, either Googs or Mum playing.



Tim Ellis outside the barn at Ross

Mum and dad had their honeymoon at Ross. Dad was very new to driving and he left the brake off and the car rolled down the drive.

John and I planted a penny up near the pines beyond the tennis court, hoping that a tree would grow bearing pennies!

I think there were snakes in the kitchen garden and around the small dam, or amongst the bamboo. We all fell into the main dam at

some stage during our youth. I have vague memories of Aunty Jean saving me.

There was a big mosquito net 'house' in the garden under the oak tree, outside the bathroom. We burnt rosemary in a dust pan to ward off the mossies too.

There were plans for evacuating us to Ross during the war, stores of rice and tinned food etc.

There was a camellia tree in the front garden, which was considered fairly exotic in those days. And there were agapanthus along the drive.

And so on....

RAMBLING MEMORIES OF ROSS – MAX ELLIS

Although our family had been living in Canberra since my parent's marriage in 1931, I was born in 1936 in Melbourne. My mother Ray and Brother Tim had come home to Collessie, while my father was on an extend trip in Europe with the then Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Page. So I guess I can claim that at a very early age I was engaged with Ross, particularly as our family ended up in Melbourne again during the war years.

Over my life I have amassed a kaleidoscope of memories for the magic place that is Ross. Tim of course, being 4 years older has much clearer and more reliable recollections of Ross as I was only 9 when we came back to live in Canberra.

Understandably many of my childhood memories from the 40s have become blurred and some are no doubt based on other people's anecdotes rather than my own experiences, but snatches remain and these I'll pass on for what they are worth.....

Our Mother's memories of Ross, stories of the willow switch that grew into a gnarled old tree, elegant picnics by the Yarra (reminiscent of Picnic at Hanging Rock!!), friends from school and university and so on must have conditioned us to love the place from birth. Obviously their very close family had many happy times there and indeed they had even lived there for a year or so. In those early days they came to Healesville by train while the baggage came by horse drawn cart. Later I suppose they had driven themselves up in their car.

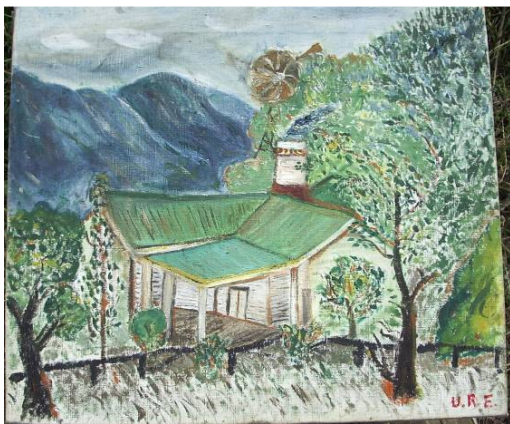


Ulrich Ellis painting next to the old turkey shed

I will always remember driving to Ross from our house in Mount Albert. We had a Morris 10 tourer and on some special occasions, Dad would put the hood down and Tim and I, in the back, would wave like royalty as we trundled up the narrow road. Outside Lilydale we would pause to salute Nellie Melba's great mansion and sometimes we would stop at an orchard to buy fresh apples or honey.

In those days Uncle Bob Maxwell lived in the small 3 roomed cottage just to one side and below the dam, and although I have no recollections of his features, impressions of the short grey beard and pipe smoke smell linger. Tim has a picture of him sitting in the chaise(?) or barouch(?) or just a buggy (four wheel buggy?) with our very young mother beside him. Trips into Healesville in the 4 wheel buggy or trap were a highlight and I can still see the 2 inch wide bare strip running along through the grassy verge of the road where the flats where the offside buggy wheel always ran. Toiling up the hill from the Yarra Bridge past the quarry, we kids would jump out and walk behind ... Uncle Bob would call out his usual joke, "Whip behind, the horse is blind" to make sure no-one was hanging on the back of the Buggy.

Tim tells me Uncle Bob's horses were called Ruby and Judy. I don't know if they ever pulled the old dam scoop with wooden handles that lay rusting under the pines just along from the cottage. We loved playing with it though.



Painting of Ross by Ulrich Ellis

My father Ulrich loved Ross and he revelled in plenty of hard outdoor work when he was there. I can recall quite a major project (or so it seemed at the time) of stabilising the bank of the dam beside and under the ancient wattle tree around the tennis court side of the dam. It involved lots of splashing about on our part while he lugged in logs and wheel barrows of earth. Adjacent to the dam on the main house side there was a woodheap and chopping and splitting wood and even cross cutting by the much admired, older Loder boys was regarded as an exciting and manly pastime rather than a

task. Later I was given a half size axe, which I can remember using to good and exciting effect, there. Dad was also involved decades later in establishing a rock garden along the bank below the "new" house.

The old man was also an amateur painter and Ross was probably his favourite subject. We have a marvellous photo of him with immense straw hat daubing away just near the wood heap. Incidentally a couple of his Ross "masterpieces" still grace my walls in Tamworth and in "Knatten".

The 'Ellis' room in the main house was on the corner closest to the "dairy". There were steps down from the corridor beside our room to the courtyard which was brick paved around the wooden slabs over the tank. I don't recall much about furniture in our room but there was a great black and white picture of a stockman with raised stock whip confronting cattle. Sometimes we kids stayed in the little room beside the outside veranda next to the bathroom and the maids room with its chugging chip water heater and tin bath. I can vividly remember reading under the blanket by the light of a torch in there, long after "lights out". I can still see the book. I wonder where it is now?

Down the steps at the end of the dark bedroom corridor was the main sitting room there was the big open fireplace and a very large kerosene light hanging in the centre of the room which moved up and down. Usually we used smaller kero lamps... the sort with a circular reflector and the gracefully curved glass which was held in place by clips at the bottom. I've got a couple of similar ones up in my cottage. I remember as a kid in that room, being enthralled when the adults called up the "spirits" using an inverted glass inside a circular alphabet of paper letters on a smooth table. Everyone sitting close around the table would place two fingers lightly on the glass bottom and it would slide vigorously and somewhat erratically around the table spelling out answers to questions put to the spirit controlling it. Sometimes one could almost believe there was an unknown, independent intelligence guiding the sliding glass and certainly the dim lamp light and the fact it was probably well after bed time contributed to the effect. Of course spiritualism, extra sensory perception and ghosts promoted by books about haunted Borley Rectory and so on would have been all the rage in those 1940s days. Dad even made a "planchet" at some stage (a small flat, triangular vehicle with two wheels at the base and a pencil at the apex, powered by fingers placed on it but can't recall of the spirit writing ever made sense! I can't imagine Granny presiding over such events so presume she was away at Colessie when the younger generation were investigating the Para normal.

The kitchen was long and cool with a window at the end. Stove backed onto the big main room fire place and the sink was on the other side I think my best memory in there is of my mother cowering under the table when she saw a small bat in the room. Seems she had a phobia about bats getting tangled in her hair. I think there was a big central lamp there too.

The library at the other end from the fire place had a high ceiling and was shut off by curtains. Outside in the front garden was the famous eternal pear tree with the ceramic gnome at it's base. How wonderful they both survived the fire.



Geoff Turner with friend, Max Ellis, John Loder and Tim Ellis on the buggy

Between the garden and the orchard was a waist high fence with white posts, wire netting and a white square 3"X 3" beam along the top, positioned so that an edge faced upwards. The same fence ran around the garden to the back by the barn I think.

On the main bedroom side, out from the bathroom veranda there was a huge circular flower bed over grown with ivy, a couple of oak trees and the path up to the outside dunny (a long drop version as immortalised in "The Specialist" a little American book about a privy builder with immense pride in his creations). Around the dunny (don't think we actually called it that... probably in our middle class language it was a lavatory or "lav"...never toilet) was something, which still has a significance in my life ... a flourishing stand of golden bamboo. I was always captivated with bamboo and as well as admiring its grace and beauty, I remember using its smooth nodules for all sorts of things. Later when we moved to 82 Boldrewood Street in Canberra I brought some roots from Ross and it quickly established itself in our garden. Later still in the early 60s when Ulrich and Ray moved to Armidale, the bamboo came too and in 1984 when Gynet and I bought a house at 99 Upper Street, Tamworth, what should appear in our front garden but the descendent of Ross bamboo. Still today (2009) I have a 20 metre wide and 4m high Ross bamboo wall along the front of my place and it's colonising energy is still such that only last week I poisoned some errant shoots that had punched their way under a metre wide concrete footpath.

Snakes are also a dominant memory at Ross. Once Geoff and I discovered two snakes entwined together on the tennis court. We raced to get help and the snakes were soon dispatched to reptile heaven by Bob or Yan. Then I remember them carefully skinning one body and preparing it to eat. I can't recall the outcome unfortunately!!

Then there's a vision of a dead snake, still twisting in the dust beside the highway (now Maxwell road) while being told by an elder, that dead serpents always squirmed until sunset. Another close encounter occurred when as usual I jumped down the stairs outside our room, only to glimpse a large brown snake lying below me. A quick, terrified, mid air change of direction saved me for another day.

Much later...when I was staying at Ross in the 70s with my kids (Gynet was at a university summer school) Tim found and I killed, a large copperhead in the bamboo just above the carport at the new house.

Speaking of the old highway, there was a holiday when Geoff Turner and I built a fort in the high bank just as the road goes down the hill. We dug a trench into the bank and roofed it with branches and leaves and we would sit and watch cars go past, imagining we were partisan fighters ambushing the enemy from our hideout with our machine gun, an old car steering column from the little house dump which was just over the Ross fence down in the corner. Last time I visited Ross traces of the old diggings, shards of china and rusty tins, still remained.

Another time Geoff and I lit a small fire in the orchard. Just burning off!! I think our ears must have been burning when all the adults came rushing out to stop the flames as they roared out of (our) control towards the house.

A cooler memory was a still, frosty dawn expedition one winter's morning with my father when I was about 8 or 9. We crossed the old highway as the sun rose over the heavy frost and wispy fog and then cut down to the river flats where we found huge ice covered pools among the tussocks. Dad played his mouth organ and I lobbed stones onto the ice ... then home to Ross for a late, roasting hot breakfast with Mum and Tim.

Ross brings memories of trees too... huge old Radiator pines, cherry plums along the top track, apricots and apples in the orchard, black cockatoos tearing into the wattles just past the huge white gum at the end closest to the Yarra Bridge (near the chicken run) and of course the tea tree and bracken thickets below the cottage.. These areas were riddled with tunnels and tracks which were paradise for unchecked youngsters.

As far as Ross being productive prior to Tim's hedges, I'm hazy, but there were the orchard fruit trees and at some stage there was a Loder onion crop in the end paddock beside the drive. At some stage there must have been animals apart from the horses.. in the ramshackle old barn there was a huge, frightening, hand powered chaff cutter, which along with the cow bails and the dairy suggested there was at least a milker or two in the home paddock.

I was overseas either in Europe or N.G. when Ross burnt down and by the time I came home in 1966 there was a beautiful new house. Gynet, Kristin, Kathy and Tim spent a hot Christmas or two there sleeping out in the back room beside the garage. There were ponies there in those days, and the kitchen garden dam was still visible under some ancient cherry plums. The long drag down to Victoria in an ancient VW Kombi was also memorable for the kids. In later years when Gynet was at University, I was lucky to be able to take the kids down for holidays there for a couple of years. In May 1978 we drove up onto the top of Donna Buang to see the snow.

Not so long ago I returned to Ross with my grand kids, Finn then aged 10 and Jude, 6. We had been holidaying at Christmas at Potato Point near Narooma on the South coast of NSW. The rest of the family had headed north for the New Year and I took the boys off too see some of my family heritage. We visited Twofold Bay stopping off to look at the Sea Horse Inn where we had often stayed when we were kids and where I had bought for 30 shillings, a rusty sabre, much admired these days by the boys. The ancient Inn is now a luxury convention centre so we strolled on down the beach where I had seen my first Fairy Penguin and seal and Mum had been trapped by the tide and had only escaped by scrambling up the rocky headland. We saw the magnificent red ruins of Boyd Town's ancient church and stopped to check out Dad's favorite fishing beach where in our day one could still see the

remnants of Boyds whaling headquarters, including the remains of whale boats and windlasses.

We walked out to Ben Boyd's magnificent sandstone light house of the southern point of Twofold Bay and headed south into Victoria where bush fires had already burnt through the Gippsland forest.

It reminded me of Mt Riddell and the mountains standing in front of Ross when we were young, with millions of dead trees covering its slopes and summit, standing tall above the resurgent bush, memorials to the great 1939 fire.

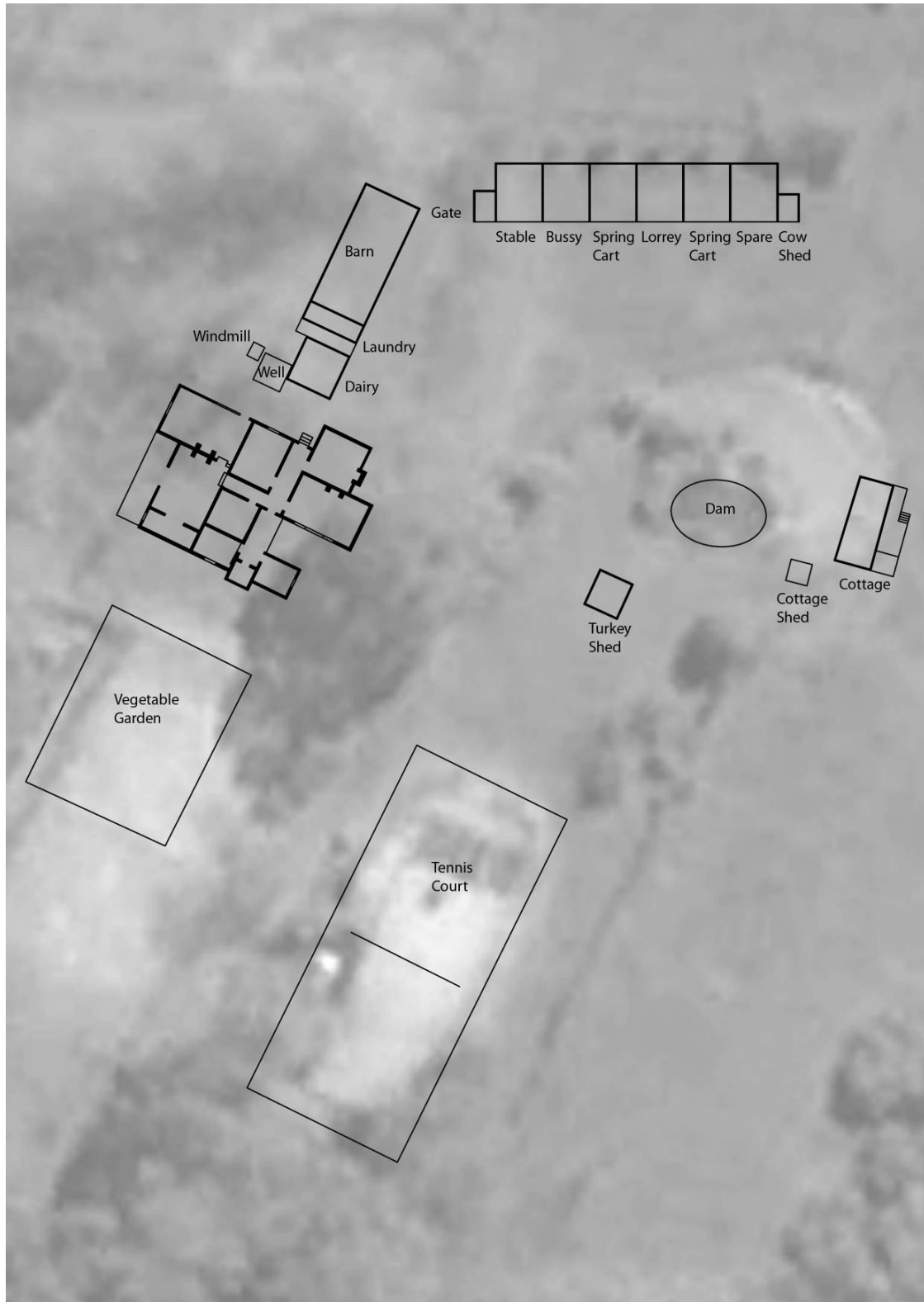
Of course visiting the Sanctuary was always a part of visiting Ross and later we went up to Badger Creek where in the past there been such great family picnics. Then for the first time we went to Barak's rather overgrown grave at Correndirk. I don't recall hearing of this outstanding aboriginal before, though I had often heard Mum talk about their family friends the Robarts who were overseers of the place when it was an aboriginal station. Natalie Robarts was a friend of Ray and Jean I think.

Bob and Ruth got us settled in and the kids stretched their legs and scampered out into the paddock. Finn was back before long. He had found something he had been hankering after for ages... a real steel mesh box trap probably designed for possums or even rabbits but in his mind anyway, fit for grander prey. With Bob's connivance he was away down the bottom paddock and in no time at all he'd captured an indignant crow. A humane naturalist rather than a red clawed and toothed hunter, Finn released him and as dusk fell, inquired after foxes. We adults scoffed of course, but at next morning at 6.30 am we were wakened by Finn and Jude's triumphant shouts. He'd caught a fox in the trap just outside the shed above the old gate. We all rushed up to see the cowering and hissing, animal. First pictures, then some animated discussion about feral animal rights and Finn released the fox which streaked away into the bracken, no doubt thanking his lucky stars for the unexpected deliverance by Saint Finn who in turn, no doubt, had repressed visions of the fox skin rug he secretly coveted....and Bob no doubt, left wondering how he would justify this timid action to his Grazcos associates!!

So there is no doubt that Finn Maxwell Ellis and Jude Madden Ellis will remember Ross and when little Liv Plum McDonald Ellis (born 26/11/08) is old enough, I hope she too can visit this wonderful fount of memories which has so far enriched the lives of at least five generations of Maxwell descendants (and their beloved attachments!) and will hopefully continue to do so for many generations to come.

Happy 100th Birthday Ross!

HOUSE PLANS



Layout of old house, garden and out buildings



ONLY MEMORIES

The sun was slowly disappearing into the gum trees behind her. She unchained the gate and let it swing back. She noticed how old and rusty it looked. Slowly she walked up the rough drive. Ahead of her, she could still see the cart sheds, the buggy and spring cart, the old harness hanging on the wall. She smelled the musty hay and heard the mice scurry.

She came around the curve in the drive and could see the barn. Its large doors were open, revealing the dark and forbidding interior. The old chaff bin stood up one end and the rest of the space was taken up by old family belongings, long since forgotten. She moved on, and then stopped to peer into the washroom, and the dairy with its white washed walls and red brick floor.

Then she approached the friendly old house. The blue kitchen door swung open and she walked in. The bright poster on the wall was still the same, the wood stove smelt good and the old black kettle boiled merrily.

She climbed a step into the sitting room. The furniture was old and worn, a large fire blazed and the old clock ticked quietly on the mantelpiece. She glanced into the library with its many books, and the old gramophone she liked so much.

Through the window she could still see the gnarled old trees that knew all the secrets that had been whispered beneath their boughs. She moved on up a few steps and walked along a passage that creaked beneath her tread.

She looked in on the other rooms. The main bedroom with its high ceiling and large fireplace, other bedrooms with cast iron bedsteads, the red and white checked bed cover and the dressing screen.



Yan on Ruby and Bob on Judy

She passed through another door, crossed a small veranda and looked into the tiny maid's room, the bathroom, with the bath standing on its four legs. She left the house and wandered into the garden to stand beneath the old oak tree, with which she had shared so many secrets in her childhood. She turned her gaze upwards to the old windmill. Its brave form silhouetted against the setting sun. Its shadow fell right across the valley onto the mountains.

She came slowly back to reality, never to enter that house again. Her eyes filled with tears as she looked about her. All that was left was the old windmill, and a few piles of bricks that had once been tall chimneys marked the site. She retraced her steps down the old drive, as the sun was lost amongst the gums, and darkness descended.

This essay was written by Jan Loder about 1968



Jean with Bob on Dorret



Yan and Bob on Dorret

THE LIST FOR LUCY'S BOYS

I have many memories of **Ross** growing up. Christmases were always a favourite time – I can't quite work out, now, where we all slept, though I remember us (kids) pouncing on Maxie early in the morning and then running laps of the house when he told us to "come back later". I remember the heat of summer – setting up the 'slippery slide' on the lawn and using (sparingly) Morning Fresh to lubricate it so that we could slide down and then stumble into the pool. I remember Sherry – mainly that Maxie was the only one who was game



The Marshall and Rodgers-Wilson kids: Georgi, Tim, Lucy, Bec, Robbie, Jo and Sophie with Sherry and Tacka in the background.

enough to get on her as the years went by. I remember the rocking boat and the tree house Maxie built us up the old oak tree that we called "Possum Palace". I remember going down to play "Pooh Sticks" off the bridge (something I still take delight in doing with friends – young and old alike – to this day). I remember climbing the 'Ghost Gum' and how high Maxie used to get when he put up the Christmas lights. I remember that they stayed there for many years! I remember picnics to Badger Weir and making caves down the hill in the Old Golf paddock...

I'm not sure quite when, but it would seem that as the family continued to grow, we seemed to go to **Ross** less and less...

I do remember visiting **Ross** to spend some time with Bob and Roo the weekend before I left for my overseas travels in 1999. The more I travelled the more I realised how little I went to **Ross** since becoming 'independent'. Indeed, on my return I took every possible opportunity to visit 'the Valley' and my friends were aghast at the fact that the property had been in the family 'forever', but that they had not been introduced earlier. And so my love affair was rekindled and that of my friends began.

I guess that 2005 was a turning point in my relationship, and that of my friends, with **Ross**. After Bobby had 'the stumble' we were lucky enough to spend almost every weekend until the following August up there. We took it upon ourselves to rebuild the vegetable garden to the point that Bob would be able to enjoy gardening with minimal maintenance on his return. We



cleared what seemed to be a jungle of overgrown weeds. We removed the grass along the tennis court line and built a retaining wall, intended so that Bob would be able to garden

without bending over too far. We paved sections to stop weeds from growing and planted out vegetables to experience the philosophy of 'root to fruit'. I would take photos to bring to show Bobby in hospital of our progress and bring him in tomatoes and other bits and pieces that he proudly showed to the nursing staff.

When not working in the garden, we have always been able to find many ways to have fun – this was particularly true in the days before Bobby disposed of the 'paddock bomb'. My Boys delighted in changing the oil and pumping the tyres and then submitting the poor old car to 'time trials' around the top paddock – I tried to turn a blind eye. The girls, and some of the boys, always found some time to do a tour of my favourite wineries. And then Bobby got better and finally, there was 'The List' to keep us busy during our weekends away. Clearing the spouting, chlorine in the pool, moving the sheep, fixing a fence, mowing the lawns – the items on The List seemed to vary and My Boys always delighted in discussing The List on their arrival and checking and re-checking it all weekend until everything was done (including anything I felt like adding!). Indeed, on arrival there would be great disappointment if, for any reason, a List had not been prepared. On such an occasion a list was developed to reflect jobs that My Boys felt needed doing. Not surprisingly, on such occasions 'time trials' and the like featured near the top.

There is always one constant in our time at **Ross** – every single time, without fail, we have a conversation about how amazingly lucky we are to be able to share time in such a magical location – The List has always been the very least that we can do. No one ever gets sick of the view. To see My Boys standing in a quiet moment and gazing out at the valley, a quiet head shake to demonstrate their awe, is something I both understand and will never tire of.

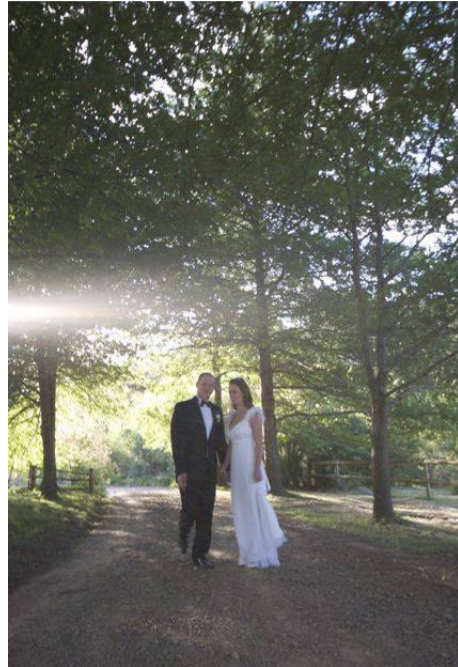


The new wall in the vegetable garden

I remember when two of My Boys had the opportunity to meet Bobby at Jo's 30th Birthday party – their excitement was such that you would have thought that they were meeting royalty (or a Victoria's Secret model). To be able to thank him in person for allowing us to spend so much time at **Ross** was very special for them indeed. I know that the feelings of gratitude were mutual for I do know how much Bobby delights in our enjoyment of such a special place.

A FAMILY WEDDING

Bob was more than a little bit excited when he received a phone call at **Ross** from his eldest grandson on 11th January 2008. Amidst the confusion of having both Bob and Roo on the line (on different handsets), Bob not wearing his hearing aid and Tim being on a mobile phone on the river at Gipsy Point (where reception is never the greatest) the message was finally conveyed, "They're engaged to be **married**, Bob!" Having always been his 'favourite granddaughter-in-law', Bob was very excited that Sally and Tim were finally taking the plunge – the prospects for great-grandchildren improving immensely!



On Saturday November 15th 2008, Tim Rodgers-Wilson and Sally Chisholm were married at Christ Church in South Yarra followed by a reception in a marquee on the tennis court at **Ross**. The festival of love began with drinks on the lawn admiring the world's greatest vista followed by much music, merriment, dancing and good food. Tim and Sal were grateful and overjoyed to be able to hold such a special event at a place as meaningful as Ross.

Apart from Jim Loder and Robbie Marshall who were both overseas, the entire family were able to enjoy the wedding together.





Clockwise from top : Jack, Rick, Bob, Max and Rory Loder; Bob enjoying a quiet cuppa; Bob and Sally; drinks on the lawn; Jannie, Rick, Bob, Max and Susie (MoG); the happy couple with that view; loves lights the night;

BLACK SATURDAY

Rick's entry into the Visitors Book: 7th-9th February 2009

What started as a weekend to celebrate my 53rd birthday with a dinner under the stars, listening to Kate Cebrano and Simply Red, finished being more like Custer's Last Stand! During the worst fires in Victoria's history we were incredibly lucky. Sally and I spent most of Saturday in and out of the pool as the temperature reached 46°. Burnt bark and leaves were dropping everywhere but none of it alight. We watched the sky turn completely black. The sun disappeared as a crimson ball but the heat remained until about 6.30 when it dropped to about 35°. The wind was ferocious and we could only imagine what it would be like with a fire in front of it. I watched the fire start at Chum Creek/Dixons Creek (Toward St Leonards). It was probably 6-8 (maybe 10) kilometres away but the flames looked over 100 feet high and moving like a train. There was a big fire to the west and at one stage I thought it had reached the paintball (skirmish games) across the road, but I was seeing flames 5kms away at Punt Road vineyard (viewed through the trees).

We are leaving (Monday morning) with the death toll at 106 and still climbing and it is still covered in smoke. The fires at Chum Creek are still very much alight but winds are S/SE and I don't think there is any danger.

The sight on Saturday night as we sat on the veranda was one I'll never forget – smoke and fires everywhere and a big one behind Mt Riddle which glowed making it look like a volcano.

Rick & Sal

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Rick & Sal

13th Feb Pat, Rick and Dan bought a new fire-fight, with the necessary hoses, sprinklers, etc, & did a huge job installing a system that (by simply starting the fire-fight) covers the house and garage - & the surrounding area - with spray. It is designed to take water from the pool & the 'green tanks' or the underground well.

14th Feb 15th Feb Luce and Dan. We watch lots of smoke, no fires. Very scary.



These photos were taken by Rick and Sally Loder

on Black Saturday

7th February 2009



To Jean Williamson Ross from George A Maxwell

On her 14th birthday August 31st 1887:

In a big braw hoose jist doon by the sea,
There's a bonnie bit bairnie that's dearer to me
Than dear life its self; my ain winsome Jean
The sweetest wee lassie that ever was seen.

Her bonnie blue eend look up into mine
Wi' a sly roguish glance I would fain divine,
And a winnin' smile shines in the clear liquid deeps,
Where a soul, soon to waken, contentedly sleeps.

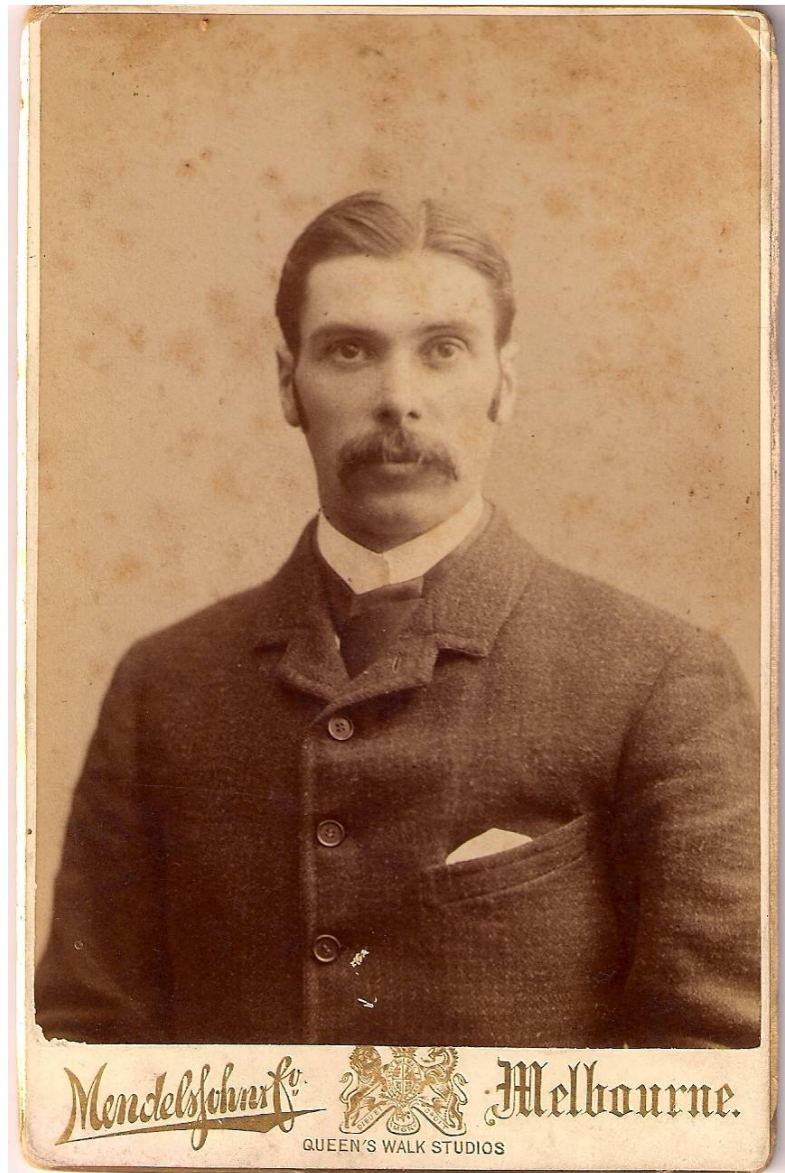
The heart of my bairnie is brimful o' fun
For she dodges the shade, and lives aye in the sun.
And when summer clouds flip o'er her sweet face
It but brightens her beauty, and adds to her grace.

When I mind that the days of her childhood are by
Wi' the sleeve o' my coat the saut tear I maun dry
And I strive frae myself the sair truth to conceal
That, my bonnie bit dearie, I lov her sae weel.

Ah me! A braw laddie will woo her some day,
Will win her and bask in her love-light always.
But I, I' the darkness maun live a' alane
And waefully think o' the days that are gane.

*George Maxwell was 28 in 1887, when he wrote this poem.
He married Jean Ross nine years later.*

*"The big braw hoose jist doon by the sea" was 'Bonleigh', the home of Jean's parents,
John and Jane Russell-Ross*

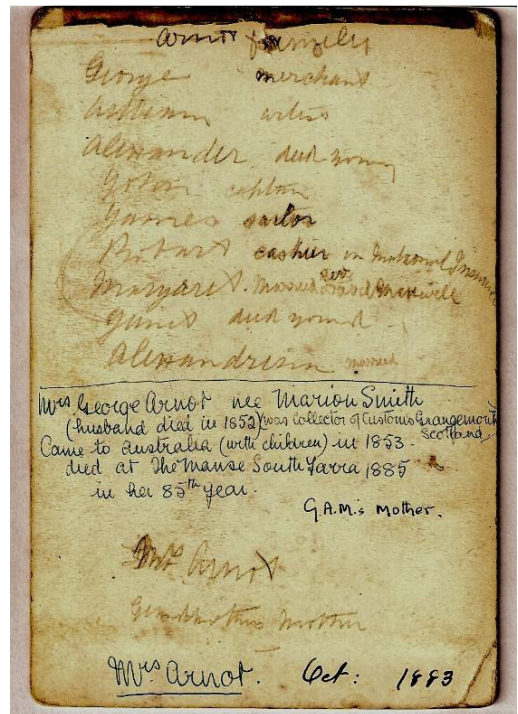


Robert W Maxwell (Uncle Bob)

who lived in the cottage at Ross after retiring as a station manager



Margaret Arnot circa 1883
George Maxwell's mother



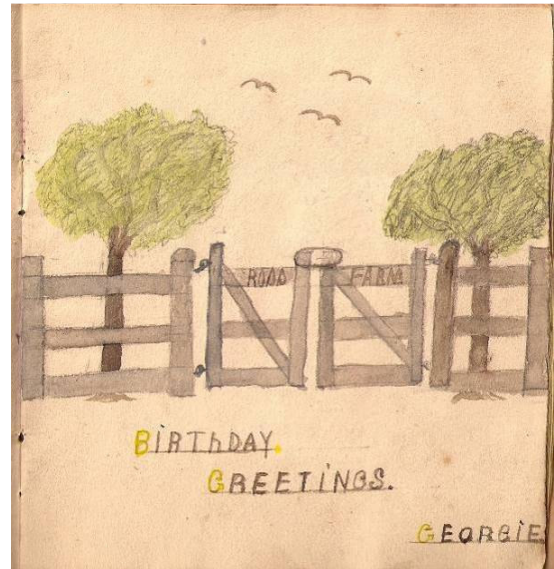
George Maxwell's mother came to Australia (with children) in 1853 after the death of her husband the previous year.



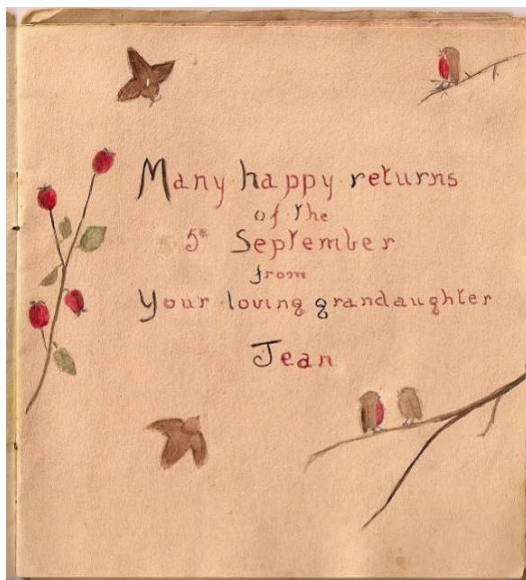
Ray circa 1920



Jean Maxwell (nee Ross) with Ray circa 1897



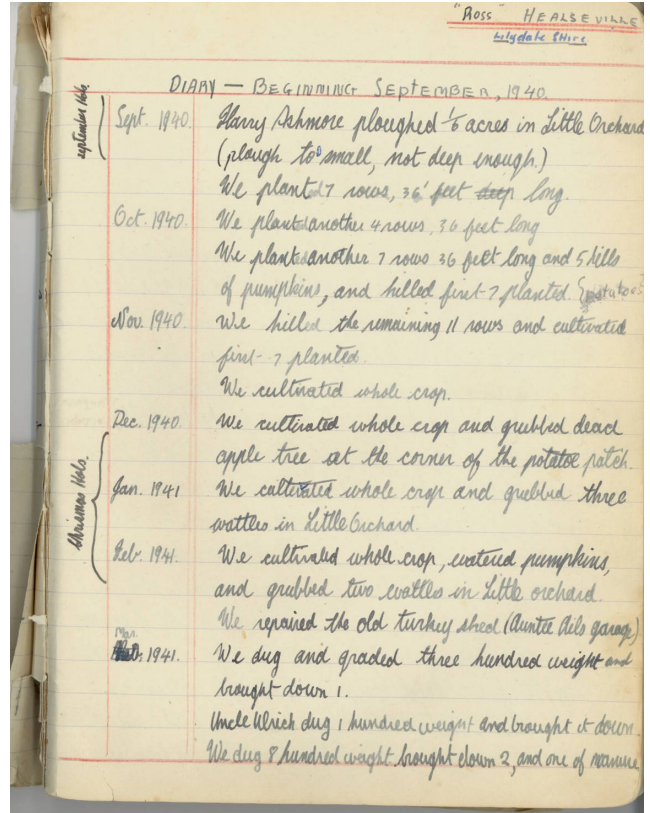
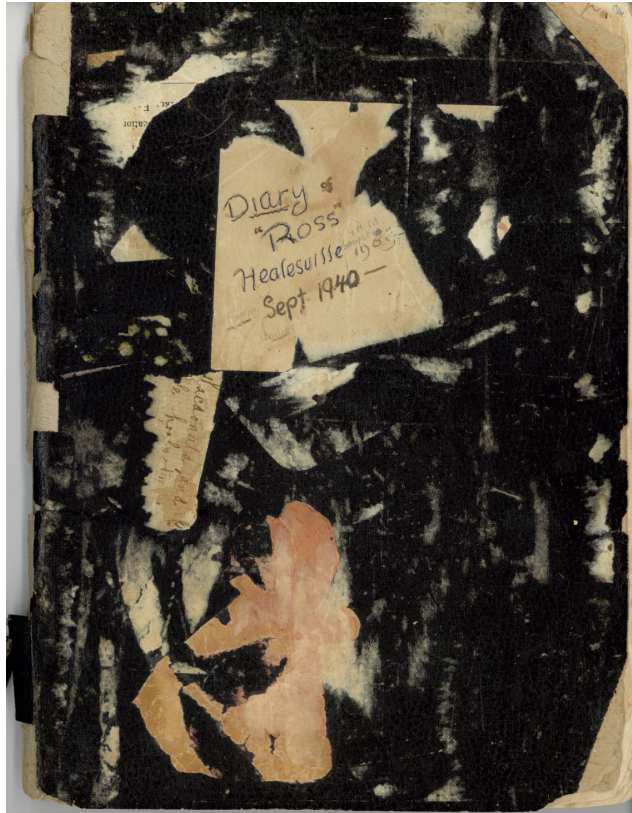
Birthday card from George Maxwell Jnr to his father



Birthday card from Jean to her father, George Maxwell



Ray beside the Yarra circa 1920

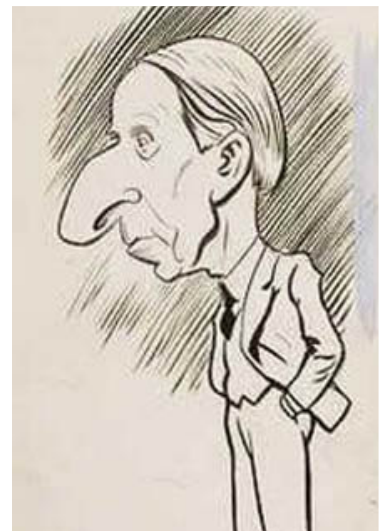


The diary was started by G.A.M. in 1909

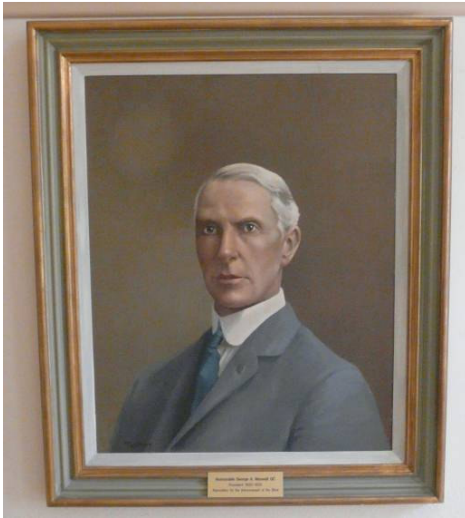
Bob Loder used it to record from 1940 onwards



Ray (in the white hat) with friends on the steps to the Yarra



George Arnot Maxwell (1859 - 1935), by Tom Glover, 1925, courtesy of National Library of Australia



This portrait of George Maxwell was commissioned in the 1990s and hangs at Vision Australia

George Maxwell was President of the Association for the Advancement of the Blind (now Vision Australia) from 1920 to 1935.

After an early teaching career he studied law, was admitted to the Bar and became one of Victoria's great criminal lawyers and later a Federal Member of Parliament. He took an active interest in the welfare of people who were blind or vision impaired from his student days. A detached retina in 1920 led to total blindness nine years later, which gave him a great empathy for those with a similar affliction.

Through his contacts he was also instrumental in obtaining the first voting rights for blind Australians. Up until 1902 blind people were unable to vote if they couldn't write with a pen. George Maxwell was working at that time at the legal firm of Strongman and Crouch one of the partners, Mr. Crouch, was elected as a member of Parliament.

When the Commonwealth Electoral Bill was being drafted, Mr. Crouch had a clause added enabling people who were blind to vote in Federal elections, constituting a world first. But perhaps his greatest achievement was obtaining the pension for legally blind people. Until 1910 only those who met the age and means test criteria were eligible. With the help of his legal and political friends a bill was passed which granted the pension to all persons over 16 years of age who were unable to work due to physical disability or blindness. Until this time these people had to be supported by their families or go to a benevolent institution. This was a world first and gave to blind and vision impaired people a measure of independence which increased both their self reliance and self esteem.



EXCERPT FROM SIR ROBERT MENZIES

“The Measure of the Years”

George Arnot Maxwell, who died in 1935, was the greatest criminal advocate I ever heard. He had terrific earnestness, a fine Scots burr on his tongue, a beak of a nose, a flashing eye (until he went blind, of which more hereafter), a genius for self-persuasion (I do not think that, once he got going, he ever believed he was appearing for a guilty man) and a capacity for persuading a jury that its members must be as astute to find excuses and doubts on behalf of the accused as they would be in their own cause “on the dread day of judgment itself”.

When I was junior, getting a good deal of work in the County Court, Maxwell was in his heyday. He and my father were old friends, and he was always kind to me. We had adjoining lockers in the robing-room of the Law Courts at Melbourne, and so frequently exchanged a little gossip as we arrayed ourselves for battle in wig and gown. In this way I obtained sidelights on his mind and methods. In addition, though I had no taste for criminal work, and did but little of it, I had a great taste for Maxwell, and many times looked into the Criminal Court to see and hear him.

A good sample of our robing-room gossip recurs to me.

“Good morning, Maxie, what angel of light are you appearing for this morning?”

“Well, Bob, I fear he’s no angel. A wretched young man called Honeybubble. A clear case, Caught in the act. Oh dearr! Oh dearr! All I’ll be doin’ is to put up a bit of a plea for maircy!”

So off we went, I to my modest fee in the County Court, Maxwell to his ‘bit of a plea’. To my astonishment at 1pm when the courts adjourned for lunch and I returned to the robing-room, there was Maxwell!

“How did that young scoundrel Honeybubble go, Maxie? Your plea for mercy seems to have taken an uncommonly long time!”

“Oh dearr! Bob, you must not speak like that. The puir lad has been wrongly charged. He’s pleaded not guilty. Oh dearr! Oh dearr! It will be a gross miscarriage of justice if he is convicted”

Well, there it is. I’ve forgotten but I have no doubt that young Honeybubble got off.

Maxwell was not a very great cross-examiner. His power was in the address to the jury, which was quite hypnotic. He could take hold of some apparent irrelevancy and elevate it into a crucial fact. Once, Charles Lowe (later Sir Charles Lowe of the Victoria Supreme Court) and I were at Ballarat, the old mining city, to appear against each other in a civil action in the Supreme Court, which was on circuit. As usual, the "liberty of the subject" cases, the criminal cases, were taken first. And so it came about that Lowe and I sat in court and heard Maxwell defending a young man who was charged, on what appeared to be impressive evidence, with a sexual offence against a young woman whom he was driving home from a country dance. The defense was consent. Maxwell was, we thought, labouring heavily. The jury seemed listless. Lowe and I were impatient. The prosecutrix had been cross-examined in detail. Yes, the journey had begun pleasantly. Yes, at one stage she had, with memories of the dance, been singing some of the current music-hall numbers. She named a dozen of them. Maxwell proceeded solemnly to address. And then, suddenly, the almost fantastic drama arrives.

"Gentlemen, you may picture the scene. The dead of night. This fine lusty young man driving this handsome young woman home, through the Bullarook Forest: the lights shining through the darkness and the wheels cr-runching on the lonely gr-ravel road. The dancing was over, but the blood was still pulsing in their veins. Ah! What a setting for romance! And then, in the silence of the night, with nothing but trees for witness, this young woman begins to sing, and what does she sing to this lusty young man? She sings the current music-hall ditties, and then she reaches the climax, and into the night air there come the words of invitation:

"Abie! Abie! Abie my boy,

What are we waiting for now?"

Lowe and I had almost to be carried out, but the jury promptly acquitted!

When Maxwell was addressing a jury, he turned everything to his advantage. On one occasion a somewhat testy judge (there were some in my day) interrupted Maxwell's address with a somewhat untimely query. Maxwell turned, and with flashing indignation, and protested. The judge, with something of a sneer, said "I'm not taking sides. I'm indifferent to the result!"

Instantly, Maxwell turned to the jury. It was his great chance.

"Gentlemen, His Honour is indifferent. But *I'm not* indifferent, gentlemen!" (It sounded like thunder with a Scots accent).

"Nor is the poor wretch in the dock indifferent, gentlemen. His Honour will take his dinner at his club tonight, whatever happens. But where will the prisoner be dining? The answer is for you, gentlemen. You cannot, under solemn oath, be indifferent: for as you do justice here, in this place, on airth, so you will receive it on the last day".

It seems, written down, to be mere professional fustian. But I shall never forget the pause: the jury wide-eyed, Maxwell's head shaking with emotion, the judge silent and withdrawn.

While his powers were still high, Maxwell became blind. His eagle eye was dimmed. Such a crushing blow would have unmanned and defeated most advocates. Maxwell met it with great courage and remarkable shrewdness. He knew that he had never been a delver into the books of the law; that his blindness should not finish him; that he might even use it, on occasion, to the advantage of his client. Some people thought this mere humbug; I thought it a triumph of the spirit. And so it came about that one day I slipped away from my own court and into the gloomy old Criminal Court, to see how the great blind advocate was going. He was addressing the jury. He was dealing scathingly with the principal witness for the prosecution. Familiar as he was with every detail of the courtroom in which he had practiced so long, he stood, deliberately, as I realized, facing a point four or five feet away from the foreman's end of the jury box; speaking, as it were, into space.

"Gentleman, it has pleased Providence to take from me the power of sight. I cannot see you. I could not see the witness. *But I could hear him, gentlemen, and he sounded like a damned rogue!*"



Some Politicians I Have Known

In the cavalcade of personalities that enter Parliament and ultimately depart from it for one reason or another, writes FRANK GREEN, retired Clerk of the House of Representatives, there have been examples of triumph, defeat or frustration. Below he records some of them for the future historian.

PARLIAMENT HOUSE at Canberra contains very many memories of men I have known and admired. Some I have admired for their brilliance of mind and others for their simplicity of mind and their loyalty to their ideals. The men I best remember were not always the successful men: as Masefield reminds us—

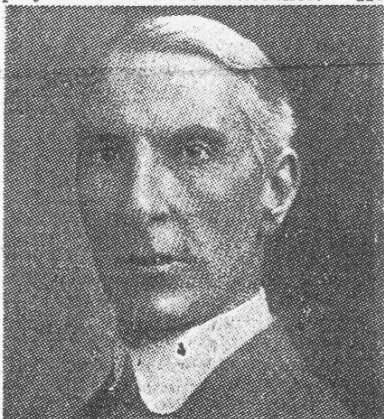
*And the conqueror's prize is dust
and lost endeavour:*

*And the beaten man becomes a story
for ever.*

I will take, as examples, four men who came to Canberra with the Parliament in 1927. They are G. A. Maxwell, P. G. Stewart, Frank Anstey and Henry Gregory.

GEORGE ARNOT MAXWELL,

K.C., was born in Scotland in 1859, a son of the Manse. He came to Victoria when about 17 years old, then worked on a sheep station near where the city of Broken Hill now stands. He was there when the Silverton discovery was made, and always declared that he lost a fortune by not remaining. He left because his friends advised him that after life on the sheep station and at the Manse the excitement of the new mining field would be too great for him, so he sought the quieter atmosphere of Melbourne and employment as a schoolteacher. He



George Arnot Maxwell.

also studied at Melbourne University — Arts at first and then Law, and was called to the Bar in 1891.

He entered the House of Representatives in 1917. He was a most effective debater with great oratorical gifts. He had also made a study of dialectics — the art of testing truth by discussion — an art now almost forgotten in Parliament, where logical disputation is not required in taking what is known as "the party line."

That is where Maxwell was unique; as the result of his search for truth in argument he had a habit of unexpectedly ignoring party policy; for example I remember that he voted with the opposition for a motion against the bestowing of Titles in Australia.

At the time I joined the Commonwealth Parliament in 1921 Maxwell had just announced that he was resigning his seat because blindness had overtaken him, but at the request of a meeting of his electors he decided to remain in the House for a period on trial to find out whether he could overcome his tragic disability.

It is remarkable that after losing his sight his fame as a barrister in criminal cases grew. As the disability increased courage and determination overcame it, and he took a major part as counsel in most of the big criminal trials of the period, including the well-known ones of Colin Ross, Ronald Griggs, Richard Buckley and "Bush" Thompson.

In the House he continued to take part in all important debates, and was one of the "rebels" who brought about the defeat of the Bruce-Page Government when it proposed that the Commonwealth should withdraw from the field of industrial arbitration.

He retained his seat until his death in 1935. When upon his death the House paid him the last tribute, it was left to a political opponent in the person of Frank Brennan to find the few words which summed up the case for him. Brennan said, "He possessed in great measure nobility of character."

PERCY STEWART, Member for

Wimmera, had one of the best minds that the Parliament has known. Nominally he was a member of the Victorian Country Party, but he never acknowledged his allegiance to any coalition government.

He was one of the Country Party managers in 1923 who were adamant in keeping Mr. Hughes out of office and forming a composite ministry under Mr. Bruce and Dr. (now Sir Earle) Page. He became Minister for Works and Railways in the Bruce-Page Government, but as a representative of the Mallee and Wimmera farmers found that he could not support the Government on policy, and resigned from the ministry.

As a backbencher he was more than ever distinguished for his mental vitality, his quick intelligence and moral courage; he was also a graceful speaker and a good debater who could marshal his facts and then sum up effectively.

From his youth he had been dogged by bad health, brought about, as far as I could gather from what he told me of his youth, by hardship and privation. When he grew to manhood it was found that his lungs were affected, so he went to the Mallee where the dry climate



Percy Stewart.